

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and objections to the claims, in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

REMARKS

A. Status of the Claims and Explanation of the Amendments

Claims 1-27 are currently pending. Of these claims, claims 1, 5, and 6 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) for allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,624,109 to Tanaka (“Tanaka”).

The Examiner has also objected to claims 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9 for being dependent on a rejected base claim, but has indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In this paper, Applicant has amended claim 1 to include elements from allowable claim 2. Claim 2 has been accordingly cancelled. Because claim 1 now contains claim elements from allowable claim 2, Applicant respectfully asserts that claim 1, and all corresponding dependent claims are allowable.

The Examiner has objected to claim 10, because of an informality related to a minor typographical error. In this response, Applicants have amended claim 10 as suggested by the Examiner so that it recites “cooperation” rather than “corporation”. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to claim 10.

Applicant respectfully asserts that these amendments place this case in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and objections to the claims are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims and allowance of this application.

AUTHORIZATION

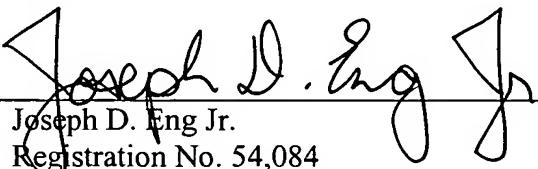
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for consideration of this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5101. A DUPLICATE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS ATTACHED.

In the event that an extension of time is required, or which may be required in addition to that requested in a petition for an extension of time, the Commissioner is requested to grant a petition for that extension of time which is required to make this response timely and is hereby authorized to charge any fee for such an extension of time or credit any overpayment for an extension of time to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5101. A DUPLICATE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS ATTACHED.

Respectfully submitted,
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